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Fredericks, Bronwyn L. *Background, in Aboriginal and Islander Community Resource Agency 1996. Fitzroy Indigenous and South Sea Islander Women's Workshop.*

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Background

The workshop came about as a result of a group of women discussing how they wanted to address some of their needs and issues.

They asked: What is happening? What services are around? What are we using? What aren't we using? Women wanted to know what was happening around them? What are some of our major issues? What do we want to happen? What were some of the things happening in other regions that we could adopt? What were other Indigenous people doing in relation to similar issues?

A circle was formed. The work began by planning the workshop, extending invitations and looking at the questions more deeply. The dates were set at Saturday 30th and Sunday 31st March 1996. The work was done and the bookings were made. The media picked up on the story and a photo appeared in the newspaper and a feature appeared on the television. There was excitement as the days grew closer.

The days came.

A circle was formed. The women worked a team, co-operatively, sharing, reflecting, respecting each other's right to speak, to raise concerns, to differ and to agree. Indigenous processes were used throughout the two days. Non-Indigenous processes were adapted to fit in with the Indigenous processes. We can take the best processes from both worldviews, merging them and using them to our advantage. This is always demonstrated in the work Coralie Ober and one of the reasons the women decided to invite her to facilitate the workshop.

Over the two days we learnt of the important work that Fitzroy Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander and South Sea Islander women are undertaking for themselves, men, children, older people, youth and the community. We additionally learnt of the important work being done by Indigenous people in other places in Queensland, Australia and overseas.

We recognised and acknowledged that Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander and South Seas Islander women have achieved much in this country's history and in the struggle for access, equality, equity and peace. While achieving much we also recognised the needs of women, families and the community that still exist and the nature of the work still to be done.

The workshop reinforced that the greatest power we have is within each of us. Our own inner power is what we can call upon to undertake the work we need to do, to empower, nurture, encourage, revitalise, support and heal ourselves, each other, and our communities.

In coming together as women we become stronger and can work towards change for us as women, for our families and for our communities. In doing this we assist in securing a better future.

Bronwyn Fredericks

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